

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 (amended) are in this application.

Amendments to the Specification

The specification has been amended to correct several typographical and/or grammatical errors.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Prior to amendment, all of the claims were “rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicants regard as the invention.”

Responsive to this rejection, applicants have revised claims 1-15 to clarify and distinctly claim the methodology of applicants’ invention.

Rather than go point-by-point regarding the Examiner’s helpful comments, the claims have been revised to clarify the handling and grouping of the inflators without the need for any particular physical structure in the claims in association with such methodology. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner revisit claims 1-15, as amended, in keeping with the disclosure in the specification at pages 4-18 thereof. Applicants submit that the claims, as amended, are sufficiently definite and distinct to be fully understood while being fully supported in the specification.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 in view of the amended claims are requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103, first over Aoki et al. in view of Katsumata et al. and Allerton III et al. and second, over EP '683 in view of EP '547.

Neither of these combinations of references establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness as discussed below.

Neither Aoki et al. nor the EP '683 and EP '547 references teach the claimed steps of grouping a plurality of inflators according to the metals constituting the metal housing shells, removing wiring harnesses from the inflators, and subsequently subjecting each such group of inflators to thermal treatment to burn off the gas generant contained therein without melting the housing shells. These steps are clearly set forth in claim 1 (amended) and form the basis for claims 2-15 (amended), all of which are dependent therefrom, either directly or via claim 7 (amended).

For example, Aoki et al. does not remove wire harnesses and does not teach thermal treatment of groups of inflators to burn off gas generant. To the contrary, it uses a laser to discharge the inflators one at a time.

EP '547 teaches cutting up inflators to remove gas generant and is antithetical to applicants' claimed method, both as to lack of safety and lack of functional identity.

Finally, EP '683 does not teach harness removal or grouping as claimed but rather simply counts pressure pulses occasioned by gas generant burn off when serially feeding gas generant containing inflators into a furnace.

The Examiner has also combined Katsumata et al. and Allerton III et al. with Aoki et al. to reject claims 1-15. As amended, claims 1-15 call for a combination of steps in a methodology

for treating and disposing of groups of air bag inflators in a manner neither taught, suggested, or contemplated by these cited references.

The single sentence relation to “screening” in Aoki et al. has to do with positioning the initiators on air bag inflators to be treated in order that the laser of Aoki et al. can ignite the individual inflators to burn off the gas generant therein.

There is no proper correlation in these references to applicants’ claimed methodology. Neither is there any vestige of suggestion present in these references that would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to combine them for any reason, much less to achieve applicants’ claimed method.

Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-15, as amended, are requested.

Conclusion

Applicants’ claimed methodology for treating a plurality of inflators by harness removal, grouping, and heat treating is simply not taught, disclosed, or suggested by the references of record either alone or in combination. No *prima facie* obviousness having been established, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-15, as amended, are requested.

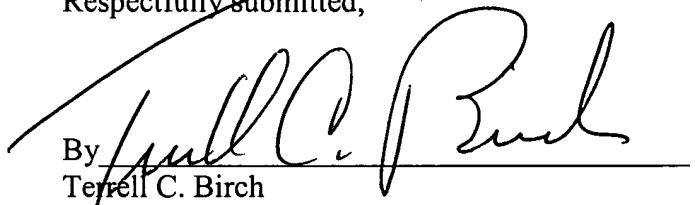
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Terrell C. Birch (Reg. No. 19,382) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or to credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any

additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: July 29, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

By 

Terrell C. Birch

Registration No.: 19,382

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

8110 Gatehouse Rd

Suite 100 East

P.O. Box 747

Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747

(703) 205-8000

Attorney for Applicant